Austrians pass blind taste test

Blind wine tastings have a way of shak- ing up preconceived notions about
wines. In the legendary tasting known as the Judgment of Paris in 1976, California
wines famously trumped all French cheninblanc, and a first that made it onto the
cover of Time magazine.

Then in 2002, Australian white wine va- riety Gewürztraminer also found itself
thrust into the global headlines when it bested French wines in a blind tasting judged by international experts.

Since then, Austrians have been adopting the savvy method of blind tast- ings to prove that they are as good as the best in the world.

Two months ago, I attended one such tasting at Fifty Three restaurant here.

Organized by Mr. Michael Thurier, former managing director of the Austrian Wine Marketing Board and current
chief executive of wine representative Austria’s Fine Brands, the tasting was di- vided into eight flights, ranging from generic Viños Blanques, Savignon Blanc, red wines such as Riesling, to sweet
wines.

We were informed in advance that there were possibly "bad wines" in the flights - wines that were not Austrian.

When the results were unveiled, the “bad wines” turned out to be top French names such as Leflaive Puligny Mon- tigny Les Puelles 2007, Didier Dagueneau Pouilly-Fumé 2006, Mis-Cauvi- et-Gilles de Veneur, Grand Cru 2005, Moreau-Fourchet-Pouilly-Fumé 2004, and Côte des Bourg La Fugue 2004.

As with blind tastings, there is always that bit of controversy. Some thought the French wines, such as the Leflaive, too young and, hence, did not show well.

Whatever the case, it did not hide the quality of the Austrian wines, especially the Grüner Veltliner, Riesling and
sweet wines.

The problem with such tastings is that the wines showcased are often not readily available. With its limited quanti- ty, higher prices and niche image, it is no secret that Austrian wines are not high on the priority of most distribu- tors here.

Out of the 20 Austrian wines tasted, only eight of the wines, which are from these wineries, have found distribution in Singapore - all in one retail shop.

But here is a bit of good news for those who would like to explore the world of Austrian wines.

Mr. Thurier will organize a series of Austrian wine activities at the Fiamiglia group of restaurants from the end of the month to the end of November, including two tutored tast- ings of seven to eight Austrian wines on Tuesday and on Nov. 14 at Boninie Wolfl in Egbert- son Quay, at 8:30 p.m. a person.

As he says, “Just like the way all the races mingle well in Singapore, Austrian wines also mingle well with the best wines in the world.”

Taste test

Think “ferment” when you taste this wine, which has apple and pear notes underpinned by a layer of minerality.

Pair with

Asian dishes such as grilled
fish with a slightly spicy sauce, or with Austrian win- er schnaps (bird breeders and
wheat).

Available at

Austrian Cellars
390 Orchard Road
B1-01 Palace Renaissance,
Call 6838-0373, e-mail
sales@austrian-cellars.com
or go to
www.austrian-cellars.com

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